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2 STUDENTS FREED BY EAST GERMANS

Americans and Briton Were
Accused of Escape Aid

Special to The New York Times

BERLIN, Aug. 28—East German authorities secretly released to the West early today an American and a British student arrested together in East Berlin Aug. 12.

The young men are Benjamin Franklin Whitehill 3d, 21 years old, of Tulsa, Okla., and Bernard John Thwaites, 19, of Norwich, England.

Their release came as a result of negotiations between a Washington lawyer, sent here by Mr. Whitehill's family, and Wolfgang Vogel, an East Ber-

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lin lawyer who had been asked to represent the two.

Mr. Whitehill and Mr. Thwaites were held in East Berlin on charges of having tried to help East Germans flee to the West. The East Germans said they were releasing them because the students "did not really understand the situation in Berlin."

False Papers Reported

Both had arrived in West

Berlin just a few days before their trip across the border to the Eastern part of the city, where East German Guards arrested them. They were understood to have taken along false papers to give them to persons seeking to escape.

Their release was kept secret until after the students had been flown out of Berlin by commercial aircraft to return to their families. Mr. Whitehill was accompanied by Ricey S. New, the Washington lawyer, from the firm of New,

Mackey and George. Mr. Thwaite flew to London, where he was met by his family.

United States officials said they did not know whether any ransom had been paid by the young men's families to obtain their release. Mr. Whitehill is said to come from a wealthy oil family.

In two projects last year and this summer the West German Government has paid East Germany considerable amounts of

money to have political prisoners freed. Last year 800 men were released under the terms of the project.

The East Germans are still holding in prison two other Americans and a Briton. One of these United States citizens is John Van Altena, a 20-year-old student, who was given an eight-year prison term last January, also on charges of having aided East Germans to flee.

The other American was identified as William Lovett, of

San Francisco. The Californian was arrested in Leipzig in May following a traffic accident that involved a school bus.

Mr. Lovett was reported to have caused the accident, in which several children sustained light injuries and an adult passenger was hurt severely. There has been no trial set yet in this case.

United States authorities are employing the help of Mr.

Vogel and another East German lawyer to have the cases

of Mr. Van Altena and Mr. Lovett reconsidered and get the men released, if possible.

It was learned that Mr. Vogel was also instrumental in the exchange in Berlin three years ago of the U-2 pilot Gary Powers and Col. Rudolf Abel, convicted Soviet spy.

The Briton held in pre-trial detention in East Berlin was identified as Arthur Wilbraham, a 27-year-old translator, who was arrested Aug. 20.

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